Toward the western edge of the Red Basin is a fertile plain, watered by an ancient irrigation system, and the seat of the chief city of the province, Chengtu. The Basin has an abundant rainfall and a sub-tropical climate and hence supports a dense population. It is also rich in minerals. It is cut by several rapid rivers, notably the Min, which waters the Chengtu plain.

To the southeast, Szechwan is bounded by the mountainous province of Kweichow, to the west stretches Tibet with its great ranges and high plateaus, to the southwest lies Yunnan, to the north Shensi and Kansu are reached only through passes over a fairly formidable chain of mountains, and to the east rise more curtaining hills. Szechwan is, therefore, a geographical entity. The Yangtze provides it with its most important gateway to the outer world. That river, on leaving the most thickly populated parts of the province, for scores of miles cuts its way through the opposing hills in a series of huge gorges. The accompanying rapids make navigation hazardous, but for centuries boatmen have traversed them, and. of late years, especially constructed steamers have regularly made the run.

CHINA PROPER: THE LOWER PART OF THE YANGTZE VALLEY

From the gorges eastward the valley of the Yangtze begins to widen, only occasionally to be constricted by hills. More tributaries enter. On the south are two lakes, the T'ung-t'ing and the P'o-yang. These are practically continuous with the Yangtze and serve as reservoirs of the flood waters of the great river. Into each empty streams from the hinterland. The basin of the T'ung-t'ing Lake and of its affluents is roughly coterminous with

the province of Hunan ("South of the Lake"). Hunan is largely mountainous and wooded, but numerous streams provide it with many fertile valleys. The P'o-yang Lake and the valleys of the streams which flow into it are nearly identical with the province of Kiangsi ("West of the River"). Kiangsi, like Hunan, is hilly, and also possesses valleys which support an extensive population. From the upper reaches of the Hsiang, the chief stream of Hunan, and of the Kan, the main river of Kiangsi, important passes across the hills give access to the south coast.

From the north, the chief tributary of the Yangtze is the Han, and at its junction with the main river lie the three cities, Han-